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4th Brit Commissioners for the revision and  
alteration of the Book of  
common prayer

TO THE

KINGS

Most Excellent Majesty.

THE  
DUE ACCOUNT,

AND

Humble Petition

OF THE

Ministers of the Gospel,

Lately Commissioned

FOR THE

Review and Alteration

OF THE

LITURGY.

LONDON,

Printed Anno Domini. 1661.

TO THE  
2011

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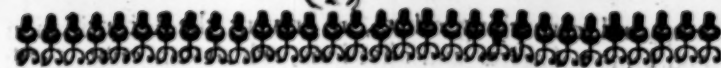
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TO THE  
KINGS  
Most Excellent  
MAJESTY.

*May it please Your Majesty,*

**W**Hen the distempered Nation, wearied with its own Contentions and Divisions, did groan for Unity and Peace, (the wonderful Providence of the most Righteous God appearing for the removal of Impediments) their eyes were upon your Majesty, as the person born to be (under God) the Center of their Concord; and taught by Affliction to break the bonds of the Afflicted, and by experience of the sad effects of mens uncharitableness, and passions, to restrain all from violence and extremity, and keep up moderation and mediocrity, the Oil of Charity and Peace: And when your subjects desires were accomplished in your Majesties peaceable possession of the Throne, it was the joy and encouragement of the Sober and Religious, that you began the exercise of your Government, with a Proclamation full of Christian Zeal against Debauchery and Prophaneness, declaring also your dislike of those who under pretence of Affection to your Majesty, and your Service, assume to themselves the liberty of reviling, threatening,

ning, and reproaching others, to prevent the Reconciliation and Union of hearts and affections, which can only (with Gods blessing) make us rejoyce in each other] Our comforts also were carried on by your Majesties early, and ready entertainment of Motions for accommodation in those points of Discipline and Worship, in which wee disagreed; and your professed Resolutions to draw us together by mutual approaches, and publishing your healing Declaration, which was received with thanks of your House of Commons, and the applause of the people, and the special joy of those that longed for Concord and Tranquillity in the Church. In which your Majesty declared so much satisfaction in the foundations of Agreement already laid, for that you [should think your self very unfortunate, and suspect that you are defective in the Administration of Government, if any superstructures should slack those foundations, and contract or lessen the blessed gift of Charity, which is a vital part of Christian Religion.

And as in the said gracious Declaration your Majesty resolved to [appoint an equal number of Learned Divines of both Perswasions, to review the Liturgy, and make such Alterations as shall be thought most necessary, and some Additional Forms of Scripture phrase, as neer as may be, suited unto the nature of several parts of Worship, and that it be left to the Ministers choice to use one, or other, at his discretion: So in accomplishment thereof your Majesty among others, directed your Commission to bee for the review of [the severall Directions, Rules, and Forms of Prayer, and things in the said Book of Common-Prayer contained] And (if occasion be) to make such seasonable and necessary Alterations, Corrections, and Amendments thereof, as by and between us shall bee agreed upon to bee needful, or expedient for the giving a satisfaction to tender consciences, and restoring and continuance of Peace and Unity in the Church under your Protection and Government; and what wee agree upon as needful or expedient to be done for the Altering, Diminishing, or Enlarging the said Book of Common-Prayer, forthwith to certifie and present it in writing to your Majesty.

In obedience to this your Majesties Commission, wee did  
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with the Right Reverend Bishops, who required of us that before any personal debate, wee should bring in writing all our Exceptions against the Book of Common-Prayer, and all the Additional Forms which wee desired; Both which wee performed; and received from them an Answer to the first, and returned them our full Reply; The last week of our time being designed to personal conference, was, at the will of the Right Reverend Bishops, spent in a particular dispute with three of each part, about the sinfulness of one of the Injunctions, from which wee desired to bee free, and in some other Conference on the By. And though the Account which wee are forced to give to your Majesty of the issue of our Consultations, is, that no Agreements are subscribed by us to bee offered to your Majesty according to your expectation; and though it bee none of our intent to cast the least unmeet reflection upon the Right Reverend Bishops, and Learned Brethren, who think not meet to yeeld to any considerable Alterations, to the ends expressed in your Majesties Commission; yet wee must say, that it is some quiet to our minds, that we have not been guilty of your Majesties, and your Subjects disappointments, and that wee account not your Majesties Gracious Commission, and our labour lost, having peace of conscience in the discharge of our duty to God and you, that wee have been the seekers and followers of Peace, and have earnestly Pleaded, and humbly Petitioned for it. And wee humbly beseech your Majesty, to beleeve that wee own no Principles of Faction or Disobedience, nor Patronize the Errours or Obstinacy of any.

It's granted us by all, that nothing should bee commanded us by man, which is contrary to the Word of God; that if it bee, and wee know it, wee are bound not to perform it, God being the absolute universal Sovereign; That wee must use all just means to discern the will of God, and whether the commands of men be contrary to it; that if the command bee sinfull, and any through the neglect of sufficient search, shall judge it lawful; his culpable error excuseth not his doing it, from being sin; and therefore as a reasonable creature must needs have a judgement of discerning, that he may

rationally obey it; so is hee with the greatest care and diligence to exercise it in the greatest things, even in the obeying of God, and saving of his Soul; and that where a strong probability of great sin and danger lyeth before us, wee must not rashly run on without search, and that to go on against Conscience, even where it is mistaken, is sin and danger to him that erreth. And on the other side, wee are remembered, that in things no way against the Laws of God; the Commands of our Governours must bee obeyed; but if they command what God forbids, wee must patiently submit to suffering, and every soul must bee subject to the higher Powers, for conscience sake, and not resist: The publick Judgement, civil, or ecclesiastical, belongeth only to publick persons, and not to any private man; that no man must bee causelessly, and pragmatically inquisitive into the Reasons of his Superiours commands; nor by pride and self-conceitedness, exalt his own understanding above it's worth and office; but all to bee modestly, and humbly self-suspicious; that none must erroneously pretend to Gods law, against the just command of his Superiours, nor pretend the doing of his duty to bee sin; that hee who suspecteth his Superiours commands to bee against Gods Laws, must use all means for full information, before hee settle in a course of disobeying them; and that hee who indeed discovereth any thing commanded to bee sin, though hee must not do it, must manage his opinion with very great tenderness and care, of the publick Peace, and the honours of his Governours: These are our Principles: If wee are otherwise represented to your Majesty, wee are mis-represented; If wee are accused of contradicting them, wee humbly crave that wee may not bee condemned, till wee bee heard.

It is the desire of our Souls to contribute our parts and interests to the utmost, for the promoting of holiness, charity, unity, and obedience to Rulers in all lawful things: But if wee should sin against God, because wee are commanded, who shall answer for us, or save us from his Justice? And wee humbly crave, that it may bee no just *Gravamen* of our dissent, that thereby wee suppose Superiours may erre, seeing it is but supposing them to bee men not yet in Heaven; and  
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this may bee reputed to every one that differeth in opinion from another. And wee beseech your Majesty to beleve, that as wee seek no greater matters in the World than daily Bread, with liberty to Preach the Gospel, and Worship God according to his Word, and the practise of the Primitive Churches; so wee hope it is not through Pusillanimity, and over much tenderesse of suffering, that wee have pleaded so much for the avoiding of suffering, to our selves or other. May none of our sufferings hinder the prosperity of the Church, and the good of Soules, and wee have enough. And wee suppose those that think the persons inconsiderable in Number and Quality for whom wee plead, will not themselves beleve that wee have done this for popular applause: this were not so much to seek the reward of Hypocrites, as to play the game of Fools; seeing the applause of inconsiderable men can bee but inconsiderable, and wee know our selves that we are like thus to offend those that are not inconsiderable; the Lord that searcheth hearts, doth know that it is not so much the avoiding of suffering to our selves, or any particular person, that is the end of our endeavours (though this were no Ambitious end) as the peace and welfare of the Church and Kingdome, under your Majesties Government. Wee know, that supposing them who are for the Ceremonies, to bee as Pious and Charitable as the rest, it cannot so much offend them that another may forbear them, as it must offend another to be forced to use them; and wee know that conscientious men will not consent to the practising of things in their judgement unlawful, when those may yeild that count the matter indifferent. And for the management of this Treaty, it being agreed at our first meeting that nothing be reported as the words or sense of either part, but what is delivered by them in writing; Wee humbly crave that your Majesty receive no more as ours, and that what is charged on any particular person, hee may be answerable for himself; and though the Reverend Bishops have not had time to consider our Additions to the Liturgy, and of our Reply, that yet it may be considered before a Determination be made. And though we seem to have laboured in vain, we shall yet lay this work of Reconciliation and Peace at your  
Majesties